

## I. Review

- A. In the previous chapter, the writer exhorts the readers to be faithful to Jesus as He has been and will be faithful to them. He introduces the theme of the prophetic picture of the exodus story of Israel through the wilderness into the promised land. The writer uses the word “rest” from Psalm 95 to describe the reality of entering the promised land and ties it to the truth that the ultimate promised land is yet to come when Jesus brings the fullness of salvation at His return.
- B. The writer points out that those who did not enter the promised land had disqualified themselves from obtaining an inheritance through their disobedience to believe. Therefore the qualifier to inherit salvation or enter rest through faith alone is established from the inception of the Torah. This point becomes even stronger established as we go through the rest of the book.

## II. Verse By Verse (Heb. 4:1-13)

- A. **(Heb. 4:1-3)** - Now the writer will exhort us all to continue in faith by pointing out that we are just like those who chose unbelief and died in the desert. We are no different in our propensity to give into weaknesses, fears, and pride. We have had the gospel preached to us and are still awaiting the promise of salvation.
  - 1. Let us fear lest we come short - The original Greek of “fear lest” is used together and when used together literally means *we are afraid so we don't have to be afraid*. In other words, we walk soberly knowing we could go down a path that leads to unbelief and death. Walking out our faith with this kind of sobriety causes us to have confidence in our relationship with God and to have no fear when faced with death and judgement. (Phil. 2:12-13; Heb 12:28)
  - 2. The gospel to us and to them - I have heard it taught that under the old covenant you were saved by works and under the new you are saved by faith. Contrary to popular thought there is not, nor was there ever, two ways of salvation. The scripture is clear that the law and the works of the law were given to show us that we are all sinners and fall short. The newness of the new covenant was not the requirement of faith for salvation; rather, it was the positioning of the faithful to receive a new heart and be filled or indwelt by the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 4:1-12; Gal. 3:1-9)

3. Mixed with faith - The word translated mixed does not mean added as part of something but rather it is a metaphorical word that speaks of the unity of the human body that is “mixed” together of many parts. Our response to God being mixed with faith speaks of faith so saturating our union with Him that without it we cease to function or have union at all. (1 Cor. 12:24)
  4. Works finished from the foundation - I believe that the writer is pointing out that from the foundation of creation God in His omniscience foreknew humanities fall and foreknew how He would save, restore, and reconcile them back to Himself. In this sense, even though the work of Jesus had not actually happened yet the surety of it happening allowed humanity to be righteous by faith prior to the actual sacrifice. Therefore, the invitation of entering into the “promised rest” was always and will always be available by faith to every generation. (1 Pet. 1:18-21; Rev. 13:8)
- B. **(Heb. 4:4-10)** - The writer now proves that there is a “rest” that remains for the people of God by continuing to use Psalm 95 as his proof text. He shows that God himself entered into rest after the work of creation but the created ones had yet to enter His rest. Joshua did not bring the people into rest even though he crossed the Jordan and laid claim to the land. There is a rest that remains for the people of God.
1. God rested from His works - The reference shows the pattern that even God walked at the foundation of creation. After the work was completed, He ceased creating and rested from His work of creation. His work was finished. (Gen. 2:1-2)
  2. He who enters God's rest ceases from works just as God did - He who enters into the rest of the finished work of Jesus through faith ceases from their work of justifying themselves before God to make themselves righteous. They cease from trying to qualify themselves through their own works to inherit the promise of the fullness of salvation. They cease because they believe the work is already finished, and by faith enter into the rest of God and the inheritance of the promise. (Jn. 19:30; Heb. 10:11-14)

- a. Sabbath Rest - Here we see that the sabbath was given to man to encourage them to enter into the rest of faith. Sadly, the keeping of the sabbath has turned into a work that must be kept in order to be righteous or justified before the Lord. This is the exact opposite of the intentions of God. (Ex. 20:8-11)

C. **(Heb. 4:11-13)** - Now comes one of the most quoted-out-of-context passages in the book of Hebrews. What is used by most people as an encouragement to believers of the power and authority of the bible is actually given as an authoritative sobering warning to believers to continue in genuine faith. There is no hiding the trueness of your faith from God. God knows the inner workings of the heart and mind and searches for true qualifying persevering faith and a ceasing from works.

1. Let us be diligent - After the evidence of the truth of salvation or entering rest by faith alone is presented the writer gives the exhortation, "I implore you to be diligent to stay faithful! Stay in belief! Soberly keep yourself from unbelief and striving in works that prove that you're in unbelief."

Be diligent to enter that rest: The rest is there, but God does not force it upon us. We must enter that rest. Clearly, the rest is entered by *faith*, but it takes diligent faith. This shows us that faith is not *passive*; it takes *diligence* to trust in, rely on, and cling to Jesus and His work for us. - David Guzik

2. For the word is living and active - Although there is a truth that this reality is true of the entire bible, the context is extremely specific. The "word" in view here is a clear command of God that the entrance into the rest of God and the qualification for inheritance in salvation is through faith alone. This word is living and active to search and seek those who would enter into it and continue to abide in it.
3. Separating soul from spirit - The scriptures often use these terms the same way, as a general reference to the inner man. But this is not always the case which can easily bring confusion. Sometimes a distinction is made between soul and spirit. When there is, we can say that "soul" seems to focus more on individuality regarding the inner life of the mind, the will, and the emotions. The "spirit of a person" seems to focus more on the place of supernatural contact and life superseding the base physical aspects of life. (Job 7:11; Is. 6:9; 1 Thes. 5:23)

- a. The idea is that God's command to believe makes a distinction from the confessions of the soul, which can sometimes be simply emotionally driven, and the confessions of the spirit of a person, which come from the core of who someone is.
4. A discerner of the thoughts of the heart - God discerns the true motives of the heart. Why do you do the Christian activities or have the Christian conversations that you do? Are you doing these things from a place of faith or a place of working for salvation? Are you doing these things based on your faith in your relationship with God or are you working for it?
5. There is nothing hidden, all things are open - The word translated “open” is only here in the New Testament. It was used of wrestlers who had a hold that involved gripping the neck so powerfully that there was no escape. In this passage, the writer makes it clear that the audience can't lose their faith in Jesus and keep it hidden from God. The word of God discovers and exposes their condition. (Jer. 17:10; Eph. 5:8-14)